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Noticias y Notas

News and notes from the Second Judicial District Court

Things are changing—for the better—at JJC

There has been a lot of construction at the Juvenile Justice Center this year, resulting in a new courtroom and a new home for the JJC Clerk's Office.

These projects officially broke ground the first of this year, but their origins can be traced as far back as 2015, when Second Judicial District Court's Space Needs Committee recognized the need for additional courtrooms at both JJC and the downtown courthouse.



Presiding Children's Court Judge Marie Ward, left, and SJDC Deputy CEO Monica Rodriguez in the new courtroom at the Juvenile Justice Center. Judge Ward says the new courtroom has numerous features that make it an appropriate environment for a Children's Court.

"The committee created a plan that calls for the exploration of a second courthouse given the Court's growth and community needs," said Presiding Children's Court Judge Marie Ward, "but that obviously is a long-term plan. The first goal of the Court has been to ensure that we are using the space we currently have as efficiently as possible in our two locations."

With that in mind, the committee sought a way to address the immediate need for improved safety and additional courtroom space at the JJC's current location, where six Judicial Officers—three Judges and three Special Masters—were sharing three courtrooms. This past legislative session Children's Court added an additional Judge.

Ultimately, working with Bernalillo County officials, the committee devised a plan to relocate the JJC Clerk's Office and build a new courtroom in that space. This plan, which moved the Clerk's Office from the center of the building's first floor to a spot near the entrance, made sense for a number of reasons.

[For the rest of the story, click here.](#)



Shout outs



This is the space where we sound the horn for outstanding performances.

This week's shout out goes to **more than 100 SJDC employees** who have volunteered for the front entry screening stations at both the downtown and Children's Court locations. By now, you all should have received a \$5 Satellite Coffee gift card. That's a small token of appreciation from the Judges and Court Administration. And we want to say once again, **"Thanks A Latte"** for your commitment to ensuring the safety of your fellow employees and the public.

We need more news and notes. Share your stories by contacting us at:
albdsxh@nmcourt.gov

A Special Group

Most of us never think about the mountains of evidence admitted into hearings every day at the Second Judicial District Court. But most of us are not part of the Special Services Division.

The eight people in that division—seven clerks and one supervisor—are charged with keeping track of every piece of evidence from the moment it gets admitted into a court proceeding until the time it can legally be destroyed. Often, in the interim, some of that evidence must be retrieved from storage and sent to a higher court—the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court—because a case has been appealed.

“We have to make sure all exhibits, for every case type, are accounted for,” said Jennifer Genung, the Supervisor for Special Services. “It could be the smallest exhibit from a civil trial or a weapon used in the most heinous crime.”

Jennifer estimates that Special Services has thousands of exhibits in its storage facility the courthouse basement. And managing all that inventory is just part of this division’s duties.



The Special Services Division staff, pictured above, performs a variety of jobs that are vital to court operations.

Special Services also takes all audio recordings of hearings created by court monitors, catalogues them and provides CD copies of those recordings when requested by attorneys or members of the public.

“We get 200 to 300 requests for CDs every month,” Jennifer said. “Locating the files and making those copies is an art. Sometimes they are easy to find; sometimes they are not.”

Preparing case files for cases on appeal also is an art. That process starts when Special Services receives a Notice of Appeal and Docketing Statement. “That is our trigger to prepare the record proper,” Jennifer said, meaning all records associated with the case, including testimony and exhibits, must be packaged and ready to deliver to the appropriate court upon its request.

In between managing exhibits, trial and hearing records, the members of the Special Services staff take turns working the Information Desk in the Clerk’s Office, answering questions from the members of the public both in-person and by phone. This group also recently was asked to take primary responsibility for temperature screenings at the entrance to the downtown courthouse.

“I could not be more proud of my staff, particularly in the way they have responded to the COVID-19 crisis,” Jennifer said. “They have adjusted very well, even with two people teleworking, making their own daily schedules and making sure that all the work gets done.” This group clearly has earned the name “Special Services.”